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BURMA: Political Tension Again Rising

As the nomination process begins for the election next year of a constituent assembly, tensions are rising between the military regime and the prodemocratic opposition. Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest since July,

A spate of antigovernment incidents in Rangoon and Mandalay high schools is testing the military's patience,

Comment: Tensions probably will rise further during the 28 December-3 January filing period for nominations as the Burmese see prospects for a free election dwindle. Aung San Suu Kyi's party probably hopes her candidacy will revive the fragmented opposition and focus international attention on Burma. Opposition parties, undermined by arrests and other regime harassment, probably will have difficulty finding strong candidates to contest more than half the assembly seats. Moreover, there are signs--such as recent plans to increase sharply Army manpower and spending--that the military intends to retain its power and relegate the elected assembly to a minor role.

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